ART AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA ONLINE COMPANION

USER GUIDE FOR CONTENT CREATION

Last updated 10 August, 2011

Overview

The purpose of the AEM Companion is to provide content that could not be included in the book that will expand on readers' awareness and knowledge of the field. It should not simply repeat content in the book but should expand on and add to it in a significant way by providing:

a) additional images or multimedia (sound, video) examples of artworks;
b) additional historical and theoretical description/analysis of works;
c) additional works by artists in the book;
d) additional works by artists not included in the book;
e) additional biographical information about artists and theorists;
f) additional texts by theorists;
g) examples of works that are discussed by theorists in Documents section;

There are probably many other relevant forms of content. As you create content, you may figure out some useful tricks that will help other users. Please contribute to this help page by adding comments. Your feedback will help make the site as usable as possible.

The Companion is a collective, online encyclopedia, sort of like a Wikipedia of electronic art. As such, its goal is to provide information that is accurate and objective, rather than opinionated. It is probably impossible to create content that does not express one's opinion (indeed, the selection of a work to include is itself an expression of an opinion of its worthiness). However, the entries in the Companion should not be a vehicle for expressing one's opinions. The comments section for each entry is a more appropriate place to express opinions and I encourage you to use this area for discussion and debate.

There are two main parts to creating content: 1) filling in details; and 2) developing body content. I have provided details for both below. The body content is your original contribution to the AEM Companion. It is really what makes an entry most valuable to users of the site. When creating content, imagine yourself as a user of the site and ask yourself the following questions: What would I want to know about this artwork, theoretical writing, artist/theorist? What sorts of images, videos, links, information would I want to see and have access to?

Books are wonderful interfaces that have certain advantages over electronic interfaces. But digital interfaces can offer opportunities that books cannot. In general, your entries should take advantage of those opportunities as fully as possible, by being rich in multimedia content, extended descriptions, and links.

To Begin:

1. First you need to find something that you really like that does not already exist in the AEM-Companion.

    a) To make sure you're not dupicating published content on the site, please search the site for the artist's last name or a keyword from the title.

    b) To make sure that you're not duplicating unpublished draft content (that someone is working on), under your user name, click on the Accessible content or Improve content tab, and browse by title.

If content already exists for an artwork you're interested in, *please feel free to add to, update, or refine existing drafts and published material*. That helps improve the Companion and keep it fresh. If you really don't like the existing content about an artwork, leave a comment and feel free to create a new entry for it.

2. When you're sure you're working on something new, click "Create Content" under your username in the right menu.

3. Select the type of content you would like to create (probably Artwork)

4. Workflow:
a. Private: If you're part of a group and set this to Private, only members of your group can see and contribute to what you're working on.
b. Draft: If you set it to Draft, any registered user can see and contribute to it.
c. Review: Once you're satisfied with your entry, set Workflow to Review, so an editor can approve it for publication to the site.

Comment and Revision Info/Log messages pertain to subsequent stages of editing and revision. Don't worry about that now.

Part 1) Details

1. Enter the Title of the artwork, properly spelled and using the capitalization that the artist used.

2. Select the decade by year of the work. In the case of works that span multiple decades, use the decade in which it was initiated.

3. Select the thematic stream(s) from Art and Electronic Media that you think best fits the work or leave blank. Multiple streams may be selected by holding down the Command key (Mac) while clicking the stream.

4. Select the type of media that your entry will include in it (not the media that the artwork consists of). Multiple media may be selected by holding down the Command key (Mac) while clicking the type of media.

5. Select keywords that will help other users of the site find the artwork in question. Keywords should be as consistent as possible throughout the database and should convey core concepts of the work that it shares with other artworks. Suggestions will pop up automatically when you start typing. Unfortunately, some of these are not very good.

6. Type in name of artist(s) using this convention: Firstname1 Lastname1, Firstname2 Lastname2, Firstname3, Lastname3. In other words, each artist's name should be separated by commas. Do not put last name first. Make sure names are properly spelled!

7. Enter year of creation. For works that span multiple years, eg. Moholy-Nagy, *Light Space Modulator*, 1923-1930, please use the first year, 1923, and clarify the span in the body of the text you will write.

8. Page Reference: If you can, please enter the page numbers from *Art and Electronic Media* that contain references to the artwork you are creating content about or of artworks or ideas that are related to the work you are creating content about. If you don't have a copy of the book handy, you

can look it up using the searchable .pdf here:
http://artelectronicmedia.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/shanken_aem_survey-small.pdf

9. More Info: If you can, please enter additional info about how this work relates to material in either *Art and Electronic Media* or the Online Companion. For example, "This work can be compared with work a, work b, work c due to their shared concern with issue x"

*** *When possible, include links to related works in the AEM Companion. This adds great value to the site.*

Part 2) Body: (this is the fun creative part!)

Remember that the purpose of the AEM Companion is to provide content that could not be included in the book that will expand readers' awareness and knowledge. Thus, it should not simply repeat content in the book but should add to it in a significant way. This means either including works that are not in the book or writing/showing more about a work that is in the book. Since your entries will usually be about timed-based media, including multimedia content, especially videos, helps make the material come alive. The content should be as accurate and objective as possible, like Wikipedia.

Format: In general, I like entries to start with an image or video at the very top with text beside it. That provides the best appearance when new entries are promoted to the front page.

Citations
Be sure to properly cite your sources, using double quotes "..." for direct quotations of others' texts and clearly indicate when you are using the ideas of others. For consistency, and in order not to clog up your narratives with citations, please use footnotes, just as you would do in an academic paper. Insert a footnote reference number in brackets (eg. [1] in the text itself that clearly indicates what specific material has been quoted or derived from another source, and at the bottom of the page, put the same footnote reference number with the course cited. If citing an online source, make the URL a link.

Editing
GUI editing screen is very intuitive in many ways, particularly for writing texts and linking to images, positioning images in the text, creating links. It is not intuitive for adding video. Another problem is that text copied from an online source often will become strangely formatted (see below). For those of you who are familiar with html, there is also an html editing window option, which will allow you to compose entries. The GUI editor is not perfect! So please don't get too frustrated if it does not behave properly. Rather, please register a comment, and hopefully your solution, in the GUI/HTML Editor forum.

Text Cutting and pasting text inserts formatting that ends up with strange results. In order to avoid that, cut the desired text from an online source, then paste it into a SimpleText editor, like TextEdit. This removes funny formatting. Next, copy the text from TextEdit into the Companion editing window. Voila!

Images can be inserted very easily using the GUI screen. I encourage you link to images that already exist on the web and choose links that are likely to be stable and not change so that your link will remain viable for a long time, i.e. a museum site rather than someone's blog.

1. Click on the Tree icon (Insert/Edit image) type or cut/paste URL of image you want to insert. Please also include Image Description and Title (can be the same), which appears on the site when someone scrolls over the image.

2. Appearance: a. Alignment feature works poorly, except for Right, which sets the image floating to the right of your text. If you are using Float-right, you might want to add 10 pts of horizontal space so the text is not crammed against the image. b. Dimensions can be adjusted easily. c. Advanced features have not been tested.
3. If you'd like to use an image that is not on the web or that you think might disappear, you can upload up to 1MB from your computer to the site as a File attachment below the GUI editing screen. After doing this, the screen will show the URL of the image on artexetra.com. Use this URL just as you would starting with step 1, above.

Note: sometimes after adding and saving an image using the GUI, you can no longer edit it.

*** If anyone can figure out how to float images to the left, that would be great! Please let me know by sending an email to eshanken "at" artelectronicmedia.com

Video To insert video using GUI editor, follow this model, using brackets:
[video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMkOAskgmLM]

You can also float text to left or right of the video:
[video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMkOAskgmLM&feature=player_embedded align:right]
[video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMkOAskgmLM&feature=player_embedded align:left]

*** If anyone can figure out how to size videos using the GUI editor, please let me know!

You can also video embed codes generated by YouTube and other video sites in the HTML editor. This makes it easy to size the video and wrap text around it. The following serves as a model (but may not always work!): I selected the size in YouTube and copied the embed code. Then I added align="left" **in both the object and src tags**:

<object align="left" height="349" width="425"><param name="movie" value="http://www.youtube.com/v/PMkOAskgmLM?version=3&hl=en_US"><param name="allowFullScreen" value="true"><param name="allowscriptaccess" value="always"><embed type="application/x-shockwave-flash" src="http://www.youtube.com/v/PMkOAskgmLM?version=3&hl=en_US" allowscriptaccess="always" allowfullscreen="true" align="left" height="349" width="425"></object>

*** If anyone can figure out how use embedded video codes to size videos and wrap text reliably, please let me know by sending an email to eshanken "at" artelectronicmedia.com